

SNAC (Plan of) Attack:

How to Assemble and Utilize a Student Nutrition Advisory Council

1. Select an advisor with an interest in school nutrition and/or childhood eating habits. Candidates include health, PE, FACS, or math teachers; administrators and admin interns; health, guidance, and outreach professionals; parents and PTA members; and food service and cafeteria staff.
2. Coordinate focus group goals, timeline, and procedures with administration/educational body.
3. Select 5-15 students for the focus group. Students should be engaged, discrete, forthright, and diverse: different grades, interests, and peer groups. Make sure most of the students regularly eat in the cafeteria and at least half make food (meal or snack) purchases.
 - a. Ask other teachers for recommendations to broaden audience.
 - b. Designate a convenient time for the group to meet. Consider transportation issues.
 - c. Be indirect about the purpose of the group: introduce the group as a way to discuss nutrition, or consumption, or cafeteria design, or convenience... do not directly reference any treatments if that would affect results (Hawthorne effect).
 - d. Discretion is key! If the students view this as a way to “bash” the school or cafeteria, it will get back to the cafeteria staff, administration, and students, and much bad blood will be created, severely impeding improvement efforts.
4. Understand the system in place. Activities may include:
 - a. Brainstorming +/- of cafeteria (layout, atmosphere, service, food, etc.)
 - b. Mapping the cafeteria
 - c. Secret shopping
 - d. Surveys, etc.
5. Create opportunities for SNAC to give improvement suggestions. Stay positive and keep feedback specific. Activities may include:
 - a. Renaming foods
 - b. Lunch line redesign (use mapping activity, then improve). Suggest limitations: add signs, buy 2 items under \$25, make 3 changes to service routines, etc.
6. Create opportunities for SNAC to share improvement suggestions. Stay positive and keep feedback specific. Look for funding and partnership opportunities.
 - a. Food service staff
 - b. Administration
 - c. PTA
7. Involve multiple stakeholders in implementation of suggestions. Use in-house resources (teachers/classes, students, clubs/organizations, staff members, PTA, community members).
8. Evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. Involve SNAC members in evaluation (recruitment, data collection, verbal feedback) but get wider feedback from other stakeholders.
9. Consider why successful interventions worked and remaining areas for improvement. Repeat steps 5-9 as needed. Customize program to school culture and stakeholders.
10. Celebrate successes. Thank all participants and SNAC members.